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Security Council

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Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Conclusions on children and armed conflict in Yemen

1. At its 39th meeting, on 26 July 2013, the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict considered the first report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Yemen (S/2013/383), which was introduced by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The Permanent Representative of Yemen participated in the subsequent discussion.

2. The members of the Working Group welcomed the presentation of the report of the Secretary-General, submitted in accordance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and relevant subsequent resolutions, and took note of the analysis and recommendations contained therein.

3. The members of the Working Group welcomed the recent efforts deployed by the Government of Yemen to protect children from the effects of armed conflict. They expressed appreciation with regard to the adoption by the Cabinet of the action plan designed to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children under the age of 18, and expressed hope that the Government would sign the aforementioned action plan with the United Nations by the end of the year. The members of the Working Group stressed with concern that, despite positive developments, the situation of children affected by armed conflict remained a serious one and that children in Yemen continued to be victims of serious violations and abuses.

4. The Permanent Representative of Yemen noted that the political unrest in 2011 had led to widespread violations and abuses against children, but stressed that the peaceful transfer of power had since led to an improvement of the situation of the children in his country. He mentioned, in this respect, the Presidential decree banning the recruitment and use of children and the April 2013 order from the Minister for the Interior to all branches of the Ministry to fully implement Police Commission Law No.15 of 2000, which stipulates a minimum age of 18 for all new recruits and the immediate release of those under 18 years of age. He stressed that cooperation between his country and the United Nations had contributed to significant progress in the field of child protection. He confirmed that the proposed action plan had been endorsed by the interministerial committee and concluded his statement by reiterating his Government's commitment to pursue its efforts to ensure respect for children's rights.

5. Further to the meeting, subject to and consistent with applicable international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 1612 (2005),

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1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2068 (2012), the Working Group agreed to the following direct action:

Public statement issued by the Chair of the Working Group

6. The Working Group agreed to address the following message to all parties to the armed conflict in Yemen mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General through a public statement by its Chair:

(a) Welcoming the ongoing progress of the political transition in Yemen, and encouraging the continued implementation of the Transition Agreement in full respect of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people in Yemen, including children's rights, in accordance with Yemen's international obligations;

(b) Encouraging the full inclusion of children's issues and needs in the context of the National Dialogue Conference launched on 18 March 2013;

(c) Condemning all violations and abuses committed against children, and urging all parties to the armed conflict in Yemen to immediately cease all violations of applicable international law involving the recruitment and use of children; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; abductions; attacks on schools and hospitals, including their personnel; and denial of humanitarian access;

(d) Expressing strong concern at the high number of child casualties resulting from mines, unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war, and urging all parties to the armed conflict to take steps to reduce these child casualties, including by prioritizing mine action to implement mine clearance, risk education and risk reduction activities;

(e) Also expressing strong concern at the risk of children being killed by suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices, and calling upon all parties to armed conflict and stakeholders to prevent such attacks and take steps to reduce their impact on children;

(f) Expressing concern at child casualties resulting from air dropped bombs and drone strikes, and urging that steps be taken to prevent such casualties;

(g) Also expressing concern at the ongoing recruitment and use of children by all parties to armed conflict, and urging them to immediately release all children from their ranks;

(h) Noting with concern ongoing attacks on schools and hospitals as well as acts of intimidation and threats against teachers and students, and calling upon all parties to armed conflict to immediately cease actions that impede children's safe access to education and health services, including ceasing all attacks on schools and hospitals in violation of applicable international law;

(i) Noting the security challenges facing the United Nations Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting, and in this regard, urging armed groups to allow United Nations personnel safe and unhindered access to territories under their control for monitoring and reporting purposes;

(j) Commending the progress made by the Government of Yemen in developing and agreeing upon an action plan to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children in the government forces of Yemen, in line with Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009) and 1998 (2011), encouraging the Government

to sign the action plan, welcoming its ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and encouraging it to implement the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups, which it endorsed in December 2012;

(k) Noting with appreciation the contact between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and Al Houthi and the engagement of the Al Houthi leadership and the United Nations Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting in efforts to develop an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children, in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009) and 1998 (2011).

Recommendations to the Security Council

7. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter addressed to the Government of Yemen:

(a) Commending the progress made by the Government of Yemen in developing an action plan to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children in the government forces of Yemen as well as the Government's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and encouraging the Government to implement the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups, which it endorsed in December 2012;

(b) Urging the Government to sign and implement the action plan to address the recruitment and use of children by the government forces of Yemen, within the time frame contained therein, in line with Yemeni law and Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009) and 1998 (2011), including the adoption of the proposed amendments to five relevant military laws and the related allocation of resources for their effective implementation;

(c) Welcoming the progress made by the Government, in particular the Military Affairs Committee, in accelerating the restructuring of the military and establishing appropriate age verification procedures at recruitment centres;

(d) Calling on the Government to ensure screening of all national security forces, including the elements of the recently dismantled First Armoured Division and the Republican Guards as well as the Yemeni Armed Forces, the military police, the Special Security Forces and the pro-Government militias, listed in annex I to the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict (A/67/845-S/2013/245), in order to ensure that no children are present in their ranks;

(e) Expressing deep concern that children are at high risk of being killed and maimed by mines, unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war, and urging the Government to take concrete steps to reduce their impact on children by prioritizing mine action to implement mine clearance, risk education and risk reduction activities;

(f) Welcoming the recently signed project of the Government of Yemen for the Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre, and urging the Government to give due consideration to the revision and expansion of survivor assistance programmes, including child-friendly programmes;

(g) Welcoming the Government's efforts to foster national dialogue and encouraging it to ensure that children's issues and needs, including the release and reintegration of children, are adequately addressed in the process of national reconciliation;

(h) Urging the Government to prioritize the development of sustainable livelihood opportunities for youth, including through vocational training and employment, in order to positively empower them and prevent their recruitment and use by parties to armed conflict.

8. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter to the Secretary-General:

(a) Commending the progress made by the Government of Yemen in developing and agreeing upon an action plan to halt recruitment and use of children in the government forces of Yemen, and in this regard, encouraging the Government to sign and implement the action plan, and inviting the Secretary-General to further strengthen the monitoring and reporting mechanism as needed;

(b) Noting with appreciation the contact between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and Al Houthi and the engagement of the Al Houthi leadership and the United Nations Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting in efforts to develop an action plan to end recruitment and use of children, in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2068 (2012);

(c) Strongly encouraging the Secretary-General to ensure that relevant activities foreseen in the action plan are mainstreamed within the peacebuilding activities of the United Nations in Yemen, in particular the reintegration and rehabilitation of children and the development of sustainable livelihood opportunities for youth, in order to positively empower them and prevent their recruitment and use by parties to armed conflict.

Direct action by the Working Group

9. The Working Group agreed to send letters from the Chair of the Working Group addressed to the World Bank and donors:

(a) Highlighting the critical need to mobilize resources in order to support the efforts by the Government of Yemen to prevent the recruitment and use of children by the government forces of Yemen, and calling upon the donor community to ensure that predictable and flexible funding is available for these measures;

(b) Strongly encouraging the donor community and aid agencies to support relevant aspects of the proposed action plan as it relates to support for the reintegration of children and the prevention of their recruitment;

(c) Inviting the donor and humanitarian community to provide funding support for the development of sustainable livelihood programmes in Yemen for youth, including through education for children and vocational training, in order to positively empower them and prevent their recruitment and use by parties to armed conflict;

(d) Calling upon the donor community to ensure adequate resourcing for the renewed mine action programme of the Government of Yemen, in particular for its child-friendly victim assistance programmes.